

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Writing is one of the most complex productive skills that students must master in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly at the senior high school level, where students are required to produce academic texts. Writing does not merely involve arranging sentences; it is a cognitive and linguistic process that entails generating ideas, organizing information logically, selecting appropriate vocabulary, and applying correct grammar. According to Harmer [1], writing is not simply a mechanical activity of forming sentences but a cognitive process that involves organizing ideas, selecting appropriate vocabulary, and linguistic production. Knapp and Watkins [2] further emphasize that writing is inherently a social and purposeful act, in which the writer must be aware of communicative goals, audience expectations, and genre conventions to produce a meaningful and effective text.

In the Indonesian EFL context, students often experience considerable difficulty when completing writing tasks, particularly when producing report texts. This factual genre aims to present objective information about a particular object or phenomenon. This genre requires students to use formal language, employ accurate grammatical structures, and organize information systematically from general classification to detailed description [2]. Such demands often create psychological pressure for students, particularly those with limited confidence in their English proficiency. Recent research by Janu and Putra [3] found that Indonesian eleventh-grade students experience moderate to high writing anxiety, with linguistic accuracy being their primary concern ($M=3.82$), as reflected in the statement “When writing in English, I often worry that I will use expressions and sentence patterns inappropriately”, which received the highest mean anxiety score in their study. This finding indicates that concern over linguistic accuracy is a widespread and dominant source of psychological pressure for Indonesian EFL learners at the secondary school level.

One affective factor that strongly associated with students' writing ability is writing anxiety. According to Cheng [4], writing anxiety refers to feelings of fear, tension, or discomfort when individuals face writing tasks. This anxiety frequently arises from fear of making grammatical mistakes, limited vocabulary mastery, difficulty organizing ideas, and concern about negative evaluation by the teacher or peers [5]. When writing anxiety is high, students may struggle to initiate writing, abandon writing tasks prematurely, or consistently produce texts whose quality falls short of their actual linguistic competence. Cheng [4] further identifies three distinct dimensions of writing anxiety through the *Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI)*: somatic anxiety, which involves physiological responses such as increased heart rate and physical tension; cognitive anxiety, which encompasses negative self-evaluation, excessive worry, and fear of failure; and avoidance behaviour, which manifests as a systematic tendency to evade or minimize engagement with writing tasks.

Based on preliminary observations at SMAN 1 Bangsal, many grade XI students expressed hesitation and a lack of confidence when asked to write report texts in English. Although report text material has been introduced since grade X, students still experience difficulties in organizing ideas, maintaining paragraph coherence, and applying appropriate language features, similar conditions were reported by Janu and Putra [3], who found that Indonesian eleventh-grade EFL students experience moderate to high writing anxiety, with primary concerns about using expressions and sentence patterns inappropriately ($M = 3.82$), and with Fitriani & Qamariah [6], who found that EFL students often face obstacles in paragraph organization and vocabulary selection due to high levels of writing anxiety. This phenomenon indicates that students' writing problems are not solely linguistic in nature, but are also associated with psychological factors, particularly writing anxiety.

Further evidence of writing difficulties at SMAN 1 Bangsal was identified through preliminary classroom observations and informal interviews with the English teacher conducted before this study. The teacher reported that a substantial number of eleventh-grade students consistently struggle to produce report texts that meet the curriculum's minimum structural and linguistic requirements. Specifically, students frequently fail to distinguish between the general classification and description components of the report text genre, resulting in texts that are either structurally

incomplete or that inappropriately blend factual description with narrative elements. In terms of language use, students tend to rely heavily on simple sentence structures, avoid the passive voice and technical vocabulary characteristic of the report text genre, and commit recurring grammatical errors in subject-verb agreement and tense consistency. Many students also produce texts that are considerably shorter than expected, suggesting not only limited linguistic resources but also a tendency to minimize writing effort, a behavioural pattern closely associated with avoidance in writing anxiety [4]. These difficulties are further compounded by the EFL learning environment at SMAN 1 Bangsal, where students have minimal exposure to authentic English use outside the classroom, rendering the development of academic writing competence particularly challenging [7]. The absence of regular writing practice beyond assigned tasks means that students rarely have opportunities to build the sustained writing fluency and genre awareness that report text production demands. Taken together, these preliminary findings suggest that writing difficulties at SMAN 1 Bangsal extend beyond isolated linguistic deficiencies and reflect a broader pattern in which psychological barriers, particularly writing anxiety, may substantially constrain students' written output and undermine their overall academic writing ability in English.

Notably, a prior study conducted at the same research site, SMAN 1 Bangsal, by Putri [8] examined English speaking anxiety among eleventh-grade students and found that fear, threat, conflict, and unfulfilled need were the primary contributing factors, with students manifesting their anxiety through cognitive, physical, and behavioural symptoms. Findings from that study revealed that the majority of students reported nervousness, physical tension such as trembling and sweating, and avoidance behaviours such as pretending to go to the restroom to avoid being called upon by a teacher. However, Putri's [8] study focused exclusively on speaking anxiety. It employed a descriptive qualitative design, leaving writing anxiety, which is a particular concern in the context of report text production, entirely unexamined. This is a significant omission, as writing anxiety operates through mechanisms that are fundamentally distinct from speaking anxiety. While speaking anxiety is primarily triggered by the immediacy and social exposure of oral performance, writing anxiety involves sustained cognitive engagement with genre conventions, structural accuracy, and formal linguistic demands that are specific to academic text production [4]. The existence of documented anxiety in EFL

skills at SMAN 1 Bangsal, therefore, provides a strong contextual foundation for investigating whether a similar and potentially more structurally complex form of anxiety, writing anxiety, also operates in this setting and correlates with students' actual writing ability.

Previous studies have examined the relationship between writing anxiety and writing ability from diverse perspectives, yielding findings that vary across contexts. Li [9] conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of 84 effect sizes from 22 primary studies and found a moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.360$) between foreign language writing anxiety and writing ability, indicating that higher anxiety levels are consistently associated with lower writing achievement across diverse EFL settings. This provides a strong empirical foundation for the anxiety-performance relationship as a global phenomenon. At the university level, however, research findings have been considerably mixed. Studies in Indonesian universities have shown divergent results, with Sofia's [10] has ($r = 0.109$, and $p = 0.566$), while others documented strong significant relationships Pratiwi & Syarfi [11] ($r = 0.717$, $p = 0.000$). International studies have similarly demonstrated mixed results, with Kamran [12] reporting weak non-significant correlations ($r = -0.041$, $p = 0.689$) among Pakistani university students. At the secondary school level, Pramudita [13] investigated the relationship among students' interest, writing anxiety, and writing ability at a vocational high school in Kediri, finding a non-significant correlation ($r = -0.030$, $p = -0.669$) between anxiety and writing ability when examined independently.

Research examining anxiety in various EFL contexts has also contributed valuable insights. Ulya, Sarlita, and Sidqi [14] found that Indonesian university students experienced moderate levels across all anxiety dimensions when writing journal manuscripts, with fear of evaluation and limited experience as major contributors. Yu and Zhou [15] documented that Chinese EFL learners exhibited high cognitive anxiety but low avoidance behaviour, suggesting cultural influences on anxiety manifestation. Rasool, Qian [16] reported that pre-service EFL teachers in Pakistan experienced moderate to high writing anxiety, with linguistic difficulties and fear of negative evaluation as primary causes. These findings collectively underscore that writing anxiety is a contextually sensitive phenomenon whose relationship with writing ability cannot be assumed to be uniform across different educational settings, skill levels, or text types.

Although these studies consistently demonstrate that writing anxiety is a significant concern in EFL writing contexts, several important research gaps remain unaddressed. First, most studies have either employed purely descriptive designs by Janu and Putra [3] or focused on university students by Ulya, Sarlita, and Sidqi [14], Rasool & Qian [16], Kamran [12], Pratiwi & Syarfi [11] rather than senior high school learners who operate under distinct curricular expectations and developmental constraints. Second, the study by Pramudita [13] did engage secondary school students but examined writing anxiety within a multi-variable framework that included interest, and focused on descriptive writing tasks rather than genre-specific academic writing. Third, and most critically, none of the identified studies has specifically investigated writing anxiety in relation to report-text writing, a genre mandated by the Indonesian curriculum that carries distinct structural requirements, including a general classification section, followed by systematic description, formal register, and the use of scientific vocabulary. Furthermore, no study has been conducted at SMAN 1 Bangsal that measures writing anxiety quantitatively or examines its correlation with actual writing ability, despite the prior documentation of anxiety-related phenomena in the same institution [8]. The considerable variability in findings across contexts, ranging from non-significant results by Pramudita [13], Kamran [12], Sofia [10] to strong correlations, Pratiwi & Syarfi [11] and the moderate negative correlation in Li's meta-analysis [9], suggest that contextual factors significantly influence this relationship, yet research in Indonesia indicates a research gap that needs to be addressed.

Therefore, this study examines the correlation between students' writing anxiety and their writing ability to produce a report text at SMAN 1 Bangsal. By investigating this relationship using both the SLWAI (Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory) questionnaire and an objective writing assessment using an analytical rubric, the study is expected to provide empirical evidence on how affective factors are related to students' academic writing ability in genre-based tasks within an Indonesian EFL context. This study extends the descriptive findings of Janu and Putra [3] and the site-specific anxiety research of Putri [8] by employing a correlational quantitative design that determines not only whether writing anxiety exists among students at SMAN 1 Bangsal, but also the strength, direction, and significance of its relationship with actual report text writing ability.

Report text was deliberately chosen as the writing genre for this study because it is one of the more demanding text types grade XI students are required to master in the curriculum, requiring not only structural precision, moving systematically from general classification to detailed description, but also the accurate and consistent use of formal, objective language features such as relational verbs, technical vocabulary, and simple present tense throughout the whole text [2]. Based on the preliminary observations described above, the main obstacle students face in this genre is less about generating ideas than about controlling these specific linguistic demands: sustaining grammatical accuracy, using an appropriate formal register, and organizing information systematically, difficulties that appear to be compounded when students feel anxious about being evaluated on their language use. Because report text combines a clear, learnable structure with a distinct set of grammatical and lexical demands, it offers a genre-specific yet informative context in which to examine how writing anxiety relates to students' actual writing ability, making it an appropriate focus for the present study.

Based on the background described above, this research problem is formulated as follows: Is there any significant correlation between students' writing anxiety and their writing ability in producing report texts at SMAN 1 Bangsal?

Accordingly, the objective of this study is to determine the existence, strength, and significance of the correlation between students' writing anxiety and their writing ability in producing report texts at SMAN 1 Bangsal.

1.2 Research Hypotheses

Based on theoretical perspectives from the Affective Filter Hypothesis by Krashen [17] and findings from previous studies on writing anxiety and performance [9], Janu and Putra [3], Nisa [18] :

- A. Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant correlation between students' writing anxiety and their Writing ability in writing report texts at SMAN 1 Bangsal.
- B. Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant correlation between students' writing anxiety and their Writing ability in writing report texts at SMAN 1 Bangsal.

1.3 Research Significance

The Significance of this study is divided into two aspects:

A. Theoretical Significance

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on second-language writing anxiety in EFL contexts, particularly at the senior high school level, by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between affective factors and students' writing ability in the academic genre of the report text. Its theoretical contribution is grounded in a purposeful and systematic adaptation of two core instruments: Cheng's [4] *Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI)* and an analytical writing rubric calibrated to the specific demands of report text production.

The adaptation of the SLWAI constitutes a theoretically significant undertaking in that it repositions the instrument from its original general second-language writing setting into the specific linguistic and generic context of report text composition in the Indonesian EFL senior high school classroom. This reframing entails a careful re-selection and re-conceptualisation of SLWAI items so that they capture how the three anxiety dimensions: somatic, cognitive, and avoidance behaviour, specifically surface when students engage in producing formally structured, fact-based academic writing. Such repositioning carries considerable theoretical weight, given that report text imposes a qualitatively distinct set of academic pressures upon writers, including the deployment of scientific terminology, relational process verbs, elaborate nominal groups, and passive voice constructions, demands that are more intensive than those encountered in general or expressive writing genres. Consequently, the form of anxiety experienced in this genre-specific context is inherently different in both nature and intensity from that which students encounter in less constrained writing situations.

Correspondingly, the analytical rubric employed in this study has been transformed from a broad academic writing evaluation tool into an instrument precisely calibrated to assess the defining features of report text, namely: the accuracy and objectivity of informational content, the coherence of organisational structure from general classification through to elaborated description, the

appropriateness of scientific and technical lexis, the correctness of grammar with particular attention to present tense usage and relational verbs, and the overall standard of mechanical accuracy. Taken together, this twofold modification, spanning both the affective measurement instrument and the genre-specific writing rubric, constitutes an original theoretical undertaking, as it deliberately aligns affective assessment with genre-oriented writing evaluation. This integration remains largely underdeveloped in the existing landscape of Indonesian EFL scholarship. By combining these two adapted instruments, the study enables a more nuanced and genre-sensitive inquiry into the anxiety–writing ability relationship, ultimately broadening and deepening established theoretical frameworks such as Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis [17] and Cheng's SLWAI [4] model by anchoring them within the concrete academic genre demands faced by senior high school EFL learners.

B. Practical Significance

The findings of this study are expected to assist English teachers in understanding the correlation between writing anxiety and students' writing ability, particularly in academic genres such as report texts, thereby providing an evidence-based reference for designing more supportive, anxiety-reducing writing instruction. In this regard, several instructional models with demonstrated efficacy in reducing writing anxiety warrant consideration. The Genre-Based Approach (GBA) has been empirically shown to reduce student anxiety by providing explicit and scaffolded instruction on text structure before independent writing tasks, as the transparency and predictability it affords in terms of organizational and linguistic features directly alleviates the cognitive and somatic anxiety arising from uncertainty about genre conventions, Hyland [19] Knapp & Watkins [2]. Similarly, the process writing approach, which guides students through stages of planning, drafting, peer review, and revision, has been documented to reduce avoidance behaviour and cognitive anxiety by enabling students to experience writing as a developmental and low-stakes process rather than a single high-pressure product [20]. Furthermore, peer feedback strategies have been evidenced to reduce all three dimensions of writing anxiety: somatic, cognitive, and avoidance by distributing the cognitive

burden of the writing task and creating a socially supportive and collaborative writing environment [21]. The supplementary use of low-stakes activities, such as journal writing and scaffolded pre-writing tasks, has also been recommended as an effective anxiety-management technique before formal academic writing assignments by Cheng [4]; and Al-Sawalha & Chow [22]. Collectively, these instructional models offer a practical toolkit that practicing and prospective teachers can draw on when designing writing lessons for senior high school EFL students with elevated levels of writing anxiety.

Beyond the classroom level, this study may also contribute to broader educational discourse regarding affective dimensions of English language learning. Within the Merdeka Curriculum framework, affective components are increasingly acknowledged as integral to student achievement and holistic development; however, the systematic integration of writing anxiety as a measurable affective barrier has not yet been fully reflected in existing curriculum guidelines or teacher training standards for senior high school English language education. The empirical evidence generated by this study may therefore serve as a meaningful point of reference for future curriculum discourse, particularly regarding the possible inclusion of anxiety-awareness strategies in English language syllabus design and teacher professional development, in alignment with the holistic and balanced learner development envisioned under the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* framework.

1.4 Research Limitation

This study has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the findings of this study are limited to SMAN 1 Bangsal and cannot be generalized to all senior high school students in Indonesia.

Second, this study focuses only on examining the correlation between students' writing anxiety and their writing ability in writing report texts. Other affective factors, such as motivation, self-efficacy, learning strategies, and classroom environment, which may also influence students' writing ability, are not examined in this research.

Third, the measurement of writing anxiety relies solely on students' self-reported responses through the Second Language Writing Inventory (SLWAI). As a result, the data may be influenced by students' subjective perceptions and emotional conditions at the time of completing the questionnaire. Future studies are encouraged to employ mixed-methods approaches or include qualitative data, such as interviews or classroom observations, to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of writing anxiety in EFL contexts.

1.5 Definition of Terms

For this study, the following terms are operationally defined:

1. Writing Anxiety

Writing anxiety refers to a situation-specific anxiety that occurs when individuals face writing tasks, characterized by feelings of fear, tension, apprehension, or discomfort. In this study, writing anxiety is operationally defined as the total score obtained from the *Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI)*, which measures three dimensions: somatic anxiety (physical symptoms), cognitive anxiety (mental worry and negative thoughts), and avoidance behaviour (tendency to avoid writing tasks). The score ranges from 22 to 110, with higher scores indicating higher levels of writing anxiety.

2. Writing Ability

Writing ability refers to a student's competence in producing a written text that is accurate, well-organized, and appropriate to its purpose and genre. In this study, writing ability is operationally defined as the score students obtain from a report text writing test, assessed using an analytical scoring rubric adapted from D. Brown [23]. The rubric measures five aspects of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics, with a final score ranging from 0 to 100. A higher score indicates a higher level of writing ability in producing report text.

3. Report Text

Report text is a factual genre of writing that aims to present objective, and detailed information about a particular subject, object, or phenomenon as it is. Report texts have a generic structure consisting of: (1) general classification, which introduces the topic and provides general information about what is

being described, and (2) description, which presents detailed factual information organized systematically. This genre is characterized by the use of simple present tense, relational verbs (is, are, has, have), technical vocabulary, formal language, and objective tone.

4. EFL (English as a Foreign Language)

EFL refers to the teaching and learning of English in countries where English is not the primary language of communication and is studied primarily in formal educational settings such as schools or language courses. In Indonesia, English is learned as a foreign language (EFL) rather than a second language (ESL), meaning students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom and primarily encounter the language through instructional materials and teacher-directed activities.

5. *Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI)*

SLWAI is a 22-item self-report questionnaire specifically designed to measure writing anxiety in second language contexts. The instrument uses a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) and assesses three dimensions of writing anxiety: somatic anxiety (7 items), cognitive anxiety (8 items), and avoidance behavior (7 items). The instrument has demonstrated excellent reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.91$) and has been validated across multiple EFL contexts.